Research Article

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE GROUPS MODEL IN
ENHANCING THE STUDENT'S ENGLISH COMMUNICATION SKILL
AT KAMPHAENG PHET RAJABHAT UNIVERSITY, MAESOT

Thirawit Praimahaniyom[1*] and Banjong Chairinkom[2]

[1,2]School of Liberal Arts, University of Phayao, Phayao 56000, Thailand

*Corresponding Author, E-mail: mr.ray@hotmail.co.th

Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of the GROUPS model in enhancing the student's English communication skill and to identify the satisfaction levels of students towards the GROUPS Model at Kamphaeng Phet Rajabhat University, Maesot. The subjects were 92 students in four different majors, including 24 Business Computer students, 24 English students, 32 Technology Computer students, and 12 General Management students via simple random at Kamphaeng Phet Rajabhat University, Maesot. The research instruments were achievement tests, assessment tests, an observation, a focus group interview, and a satisfaction form. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, mean and standard deviation, while content analysis was applied for qualitative analysis. The findings were as follows. 1) Regarding the GROUPS model assessment, the achievement t-test scores of pre-test and post-test average mean score were 8.93 and 19.63, while both learning units and individual major assessment in overall pre-test was at "Need to improve" and post-test was at "Excellence." 2) Regarding the English performance assessment, the achievement t-test scores of pre-test and post-test average mean scores were at 11.91 and 21.85 while learning units and individual major assessment in overall pre-test was at "Fair" and post-test was at "Good." 3) Regarding the students' self-assessment overall pre-test was at "Least" and post-test was at "Moderate." 4) In terms of the students' behavior observation by checklist, by the groups and the individual were at "Less" at the 1st time and "Moderate" at the 2nd time while the 3rd time, the groups were at "High" and the individual was at "Moderate." In addition, the students' behavior observation was in a positive

manner. 5) The focus group interview showed that the processes were clear in detail and enabled the students to develop their English communication skills. 6) Regarding the students' satisfaction with the GROUPS model overall, it was at "Highest."

Keywords: GROUPS Model, English Communication Skills

Introduction

Recently, because of unavoidable interaction in English with other people from several places, the number of individuals who can communicate in English tends to rise interminably. People who are even good at English may wish to improve their English in advance since so much in knowledge is obtainable in the English language and more for doing transaction and presentation (Teng & Sinwongsuwat, 2015, pp. 13-20). English communicative approach in Thailand was suggested in the earlier century since it was expected to offer the students improving their English for communication with others (Panyawong-Ngam et al., 2015, pp. 77–82). In addition, while stepping into the 21st century, the concept of learning skill has been revived by educators in many different ways (Partnership for the 21st Century Skills, 2009). New concepts and theories of educational pedagogy are integrated into several approaches to enhance the student's ability (Serbjit, 2013, pp. 6-7). In fact, English communication skill for EFL students is acquired through constant practicing with several strategies and it takes a long time to be successful (Jung, 2013, pp. 6-7). The teachers, hence, need to adopt all those learning theories and generate them in a proper way for their students.

In addition, drawing from the researcher's experience, who teaches English communication skill for the students at Kamphaeng Phet Rajabhat University, Maesot, was found that most students had problems with English communication skills. The primary cause may be due to students were very different in English background and their exposure to learning techniques which were not appropriate for their condition and context (Sahin, 2009, pp. 1464-1468). It is consistent with the study of Fathma and Xiao-hua (1985, pp. 167-168) that strategy in learning a language was able to assist and encourage student's ability in communication skill particularly authentic learning in real situations. In addition, Gillette (1987, pp. 268-279) stated that students who use their own second language learning strategies will have the courage and attempt to learn and be eager to use English for communication. This shows that learning strategies have a great impact on learning English communication skill. Therefore, this study would like to prove the effectiveness of the GROUPS model which was created by the researcher, in the learning setting at Kamphaeng Phet Rajabhat University, Maesot, Thailand.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the effectiveness of the GROUPS model in enhancing the student's English communication skill at Kamphaeng Phet Rajabhat University, Maesot.

2. To identify the satisfaction levels of students toward the GROUPS model at Kamphaeng Phet Rajabhat University, Maesot.

The conceptual framework and GROUPS model framework

This paper rests on a wider research that seeks for the development of English communication for the 21st Century learning skills by employing GROUPS model for students at Kamphaeng Phet Rajabhat University, Maesot. Initially, the researcher has created this GROUPS model by himself from the study of Thai education policies, a framework for the 21st century, learning theories (i.e. collaborative learning, cooperative learning, team-based learning) and needs assessments from the stakeholders. The information has been synthesized and analyzed in developing the conceptual framework of GROUPS model as shown in figure 1 as follows.
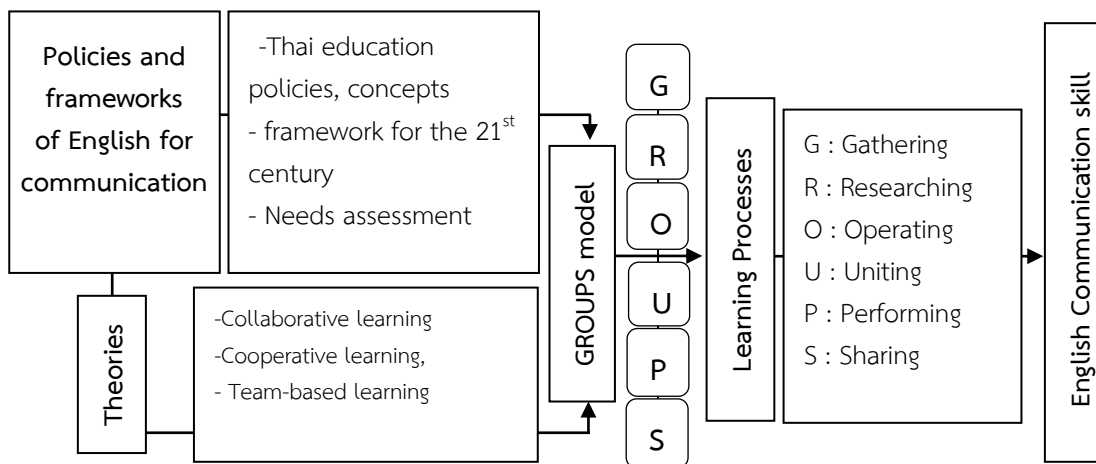
Figure 1. The conceptual framework

The GROUPS model then has been created by the researcher himself. Its steps and learning processes are interrelated to the learning and teaching approach. It may be able to develop students' skills of the 21st-century learning skills and English Communication skill as shown in figure 2.
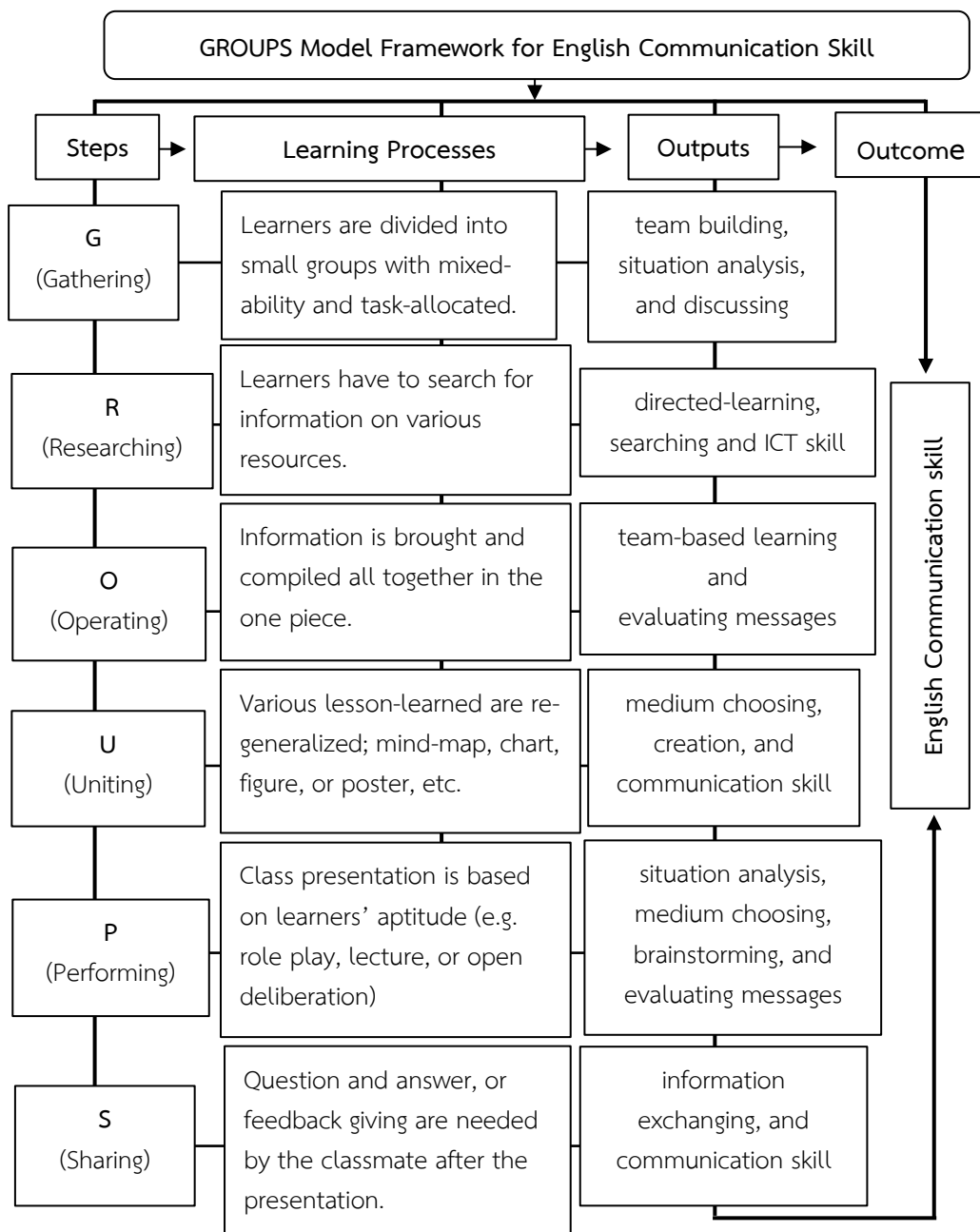
Figure 2. GROUPS model Framework for English Communication skill

Research Procedures

Population: They were 145 students from seven different majors, including two classes of Business Computer (24 and 12 students), three classes of General Management (23, 18 and 12 students), 32 Technology Computer students and 24 English students. They enrolled in English for Communication Course in the 2nd semester of the 2016 academic year at Kamphaeng Phet Rajabhat University, Maesot.

Sample Group: The subjects who enrolled in English for Communication Course were 92 students from four difference majors of whole population, including 24 Business Computer students, 24 English students, 32 Technology Computer students, and 12 General Management students via simple random sampling in the 2nd semester of the 2016 academic year at Kamphaeng Phet Rajabhat University, Maesot.

Research Instruments

Quantitative Data

1. There were three parts of GROUPS model achievement: 1) an achievement test, 2) learning units assessment, and 3) individual major assessment for pre-test and post-test. It was a 4-point Likert scale its criteria interpretation; Excellence (4 = 3.26 - 4.00), Good (3 = 2.51 - 3.25), Fair (2 = 1.76 - 2.50), and Need to improve (1 = 1.00 - 1.75).

2. There were three parts of English performance assessment: 1) English performance achievement test, 2) learning units performance assessment, and 3) individual major assessment for pre-test and post-test. It was a 4-point Likert scale its criteria interpretation; Excellence (4 = 3.26 - 4.00), Good (3 = 2.51 - 3.25), Fair (2 = 1.76 - 2.50), and Need to improve (1 = 1.00 - 1.75).

3. Self-assessment, it was a questionnaire for the students' self-assessment. It was a 5-point Likert scale, 15 items, and 1 open-ended question.

4. Behavior observation, it was a questionnaire (checklist) for the students. It was a 5-point Likert scale, 14 items, and 1 open-ended question.

5. Students' satisfaction, it was a questionnaire for a 5-point Likert scale, 17 items, and 1 open-ended question.

These instruments were examined by 3 experts in order to prove the content validity and the tools' Index of item-objective congruence (IOC) were between 0.65 and 1.00. This confirmed the contents' validity that could be utilized in this study. It was then tried out with a non-sample group for 35 people and the validity was reliable at 0.75.

Qualitative Data

There were 1) Behavior observation: it was employed non-participant, unstructured observation, in order to observe the outcomes of the students' behavior during conducting the GROUPS model in two points namely good behaviors and behaviors need to improve. 2) Focus group interview: it was employed structured-interview with an opened-end question. There were two questions; *What are the advantages of this process?* and *What do you need to improve in this process?* These qualitative data were examined by 3 experts in order to prove the content validity and the tools' Index of item-objective congruence (IOC) were between 0.65 and 1.00. This confirmed the contents' validity that could be utilized in this study.

Data Collection

The subjects were informed about the nature of the study and how the research findings would be used before they participated in the implementation. They were entirely consented to be a subject. They were aware of the right to withdraw from the research at any time and their data would be destroyed. The data was distributed to the subjects and has been conducted for one semester (14 weeks for 7 learning units conducting and 2 weeks for pre-test and post-test) in the 2nd semester of the 2016 academic year at Kampaeng Phet Rajabhat University, Maesot by the researcher himself. The data has been implemented as the following steps:

1. The subjects were required to do a pre-test in the first week. The scores were collected to compare with the post-test.

2. Instruction; after the pre-test, the subjects had studied throughout 7 learning units (lessons) for 14 weeks. Each unit consisted of 6 hours (2 weeks) of the classroom session. The assessments were carried out in every learning unit in order to examine students' progress and compared the scores in overall.

3. Reflections; the behavior observation (non-participant, unstructured observation) was carried out for students in three times while instructing the lesson at the week of 5th, 11th and 16th by helpers in two points; 1) good behaviors and 2) behaviors need to improve. The data obtained from the behavior observation was synthesized essential issues in overall and descriptively presented. The data was carried out in Thai. They were translated into English by the researcher.

In addition, the subjects were required to provide their reflections towards the GROUPS model through a focus group interview. The informants were twelve students (3 students in each major). They were randomly selected based on their English proficiency score average point from the previous

learning units that they have studied by mixed-ability, including excellence, intermediate and low from each major. The interviews were conducted after class three times in the week of 4th, 10th and 16th. The approximate time spent for the focus group interview was between 40-60 minutes. The statements of interviewees were noted in Thai and synthesized essential issues in overall and descriptively presented. The statements were translated into English by the researcher.

4. At the end of the course, the subjects were required to do the post-test through achievement tests, assessment tests, and a satisfaction form. The scores in post-test were analyzed and compared with the pre-test scores by means of statistical analyses.

Data analysis

Quantitative data was analyzed by utilizing descriptive statistics: Mean ($\overline{\mathbf{X}}$) and Standard Deviation (S.D.) while content analysis was applied for qualitative one. Moreover, tables and figures were used for describing the finding.

Research Results

Research results were presented through the research objectives.

To investigate the effectiveness of the GROUPS model in enhancing the student's English communication skill

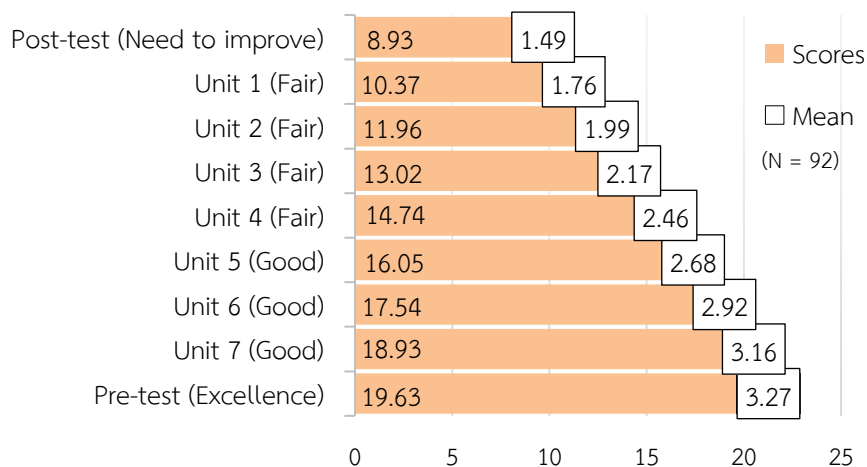1. GROUPS model assessment' results were illustrated as follows:

1.1 The achievement test's results showed that students were improving in English communication by employing GROUPS model respectively. The average mean scores of pre-test and post-test were 8.93 and 19.63. The T-test proved that there was significantly higher, $P < .05$, than pre-test mean scores as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. T-test of pre-test and post-test mean score of GROUPS model achievement test

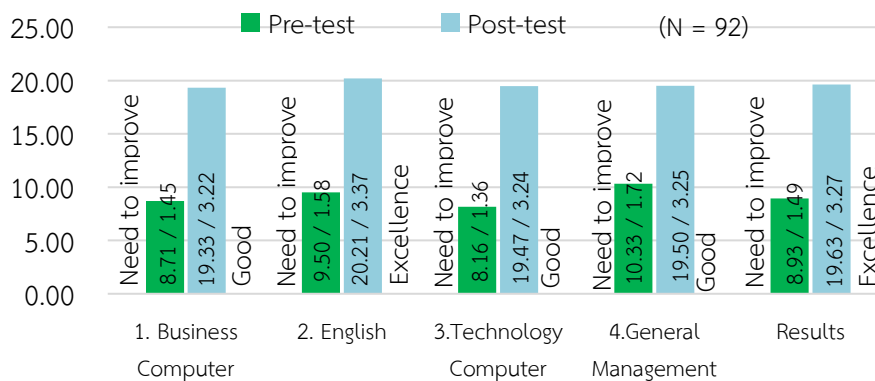| Test	N	Total	Mean	S.D.	D	S.D.$_D$	t	Sig.
Pre-test	92	822	8.93	1.49	10.70	1.49	68.95*	0.0000
Post-test	92	1806	19.63	0.73				

Note: *significant level of .05 ($P \leq .05$)

1.2   Learning units assessment's results showed that the average mean score of pre-test was at "Need to improve", during learning units 1-4 were at "Fair", units 5-7 were at "Good", and post-test was at "Excellence" as illustrated in figure 3.

	Scores	Mean
Post-test (Need to improve)	8.93	1.49
Unit 1 (Fair)	10.37	1.76
Unit 2 (Fair)	11.96	1.99
Unit 3 (Fair)	13.02	2.17
Unit 4 (Fair)	14.74	2.46
Unit 5 (Good)	16.05	2.68
Unit 6 (Good)	17.54	2.92
Unit 7 (Good)	18.93	3.16
Pre-test (Excellence)	19.63	3.27

(N = 92)

Figure 3. Results of learning units assessment

1.3   The results of individual major assessment pre-test and post-test in overall, pre-test was at "Need to improve" and post-test was at "Excellence" while for all major pre-test, gained "Need to improve". However, post-test English major gained at "Excellence" while other majors gained at "Good" as illustrated in figure 4.

	Pre-test	Post-test	(N = 92)

1. Business Computer	2. English	3.Technology Computer	4.General Management	Results
Need to improve 8.71 / 1.45	Need to improve 9.50 / 1.58	Need to improve 8.16 / 1.36	Need to improve 10.33 / 1.72	Need to improve 8.93 / 1.49
19.33 / 3.22 Good	20.21 / 3.37 Excellence	19.47 / 3.24 Good	19.50 / 3.25 Good	19.63 / 3.27 Excellence

Figure 4. Individual major's results of pre-test and post-test assessment

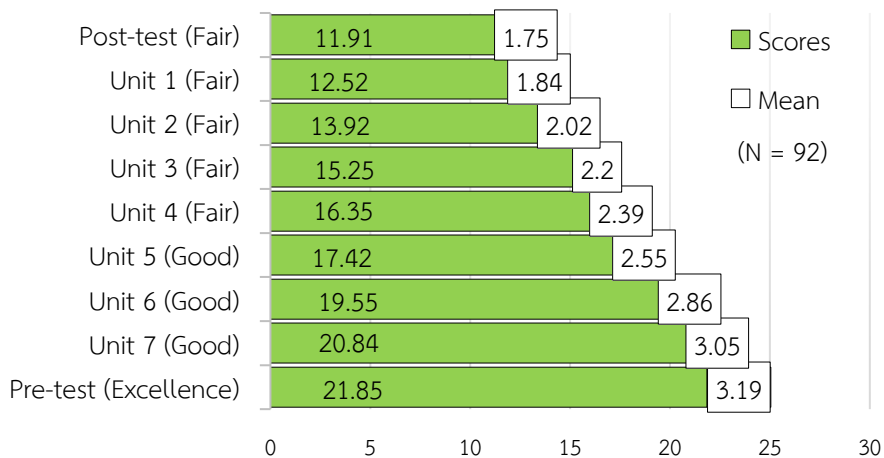2. The results of English performance assessment were shown as follows.

2.1   English performance achievement test's results showed that students were improving in English performance respectively. The average mean scores of pre-test and post-test were at 11.91 and 21.85. The T-test proved that there was significantly higher, $P < .05$, than pre-test as showed in Table 2.

Table 2. T-test for English performance test mean scores

| Test	N	Total	Mean	S.D.	D	S.D. $_D$	t	Sig.
Pre-test	92	1096	11.91	1.55	9.93	1.86	51.33*	0.0000
Post-test	92	2054	21.85	1.83				

Note: *significant level of .05 ($P \leq .05$)

2.2   The results of learning units performance assessment showed that pre-test and learning units 1-4 were at "Fair". Meanwhile learning units 5-7 and post-test were at "Good" as illustrated in figure 5.


Figure 5. English performance assessment for learning units

2.3   The result of individual major assessment in overall pre-test was at "Fair" and post-test was at "Good". Pre-test, General Management and English major gained at "Fair" while Business Computer and Technology Computer gained at "Need to improve". Post-test, English major gained at "Excellence" and the other majors gained at "Good" as illustrated in figure 6.
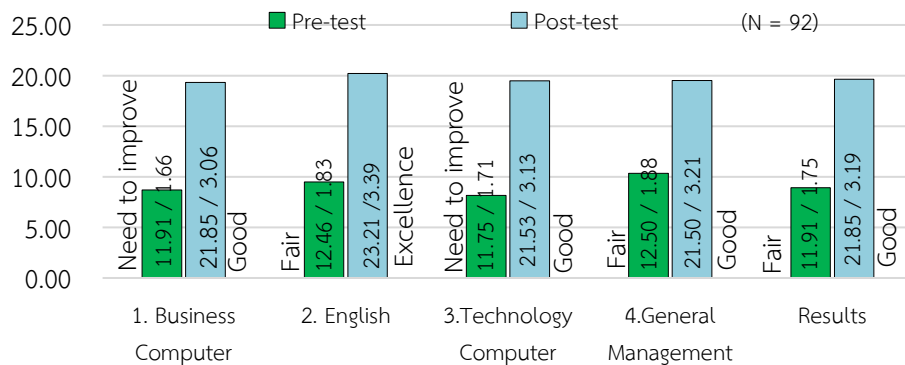
**Figure 6.** Individual major assessment pre-test and post-test mean scores

3.   The result of students' self-assessment showed that average mean pre-test was at "Least" while post-test was at "Moderate" as illustrated in figure 7.
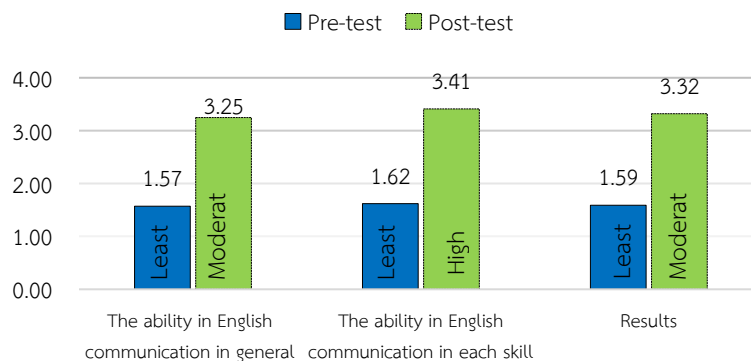
Figure 7. Students' self-assessment means scores

4.   The results of students' behavior observation were illustrated as follows.

4.1   The results of students' behavior observation (checklist) both groups and individual showed that the 1st time was at "Less" and the 2nd time was at "Moderate". Meanwhile the 3rd time, groups were at "High" and individual was at "Moderate" as illustrated in figure 8.
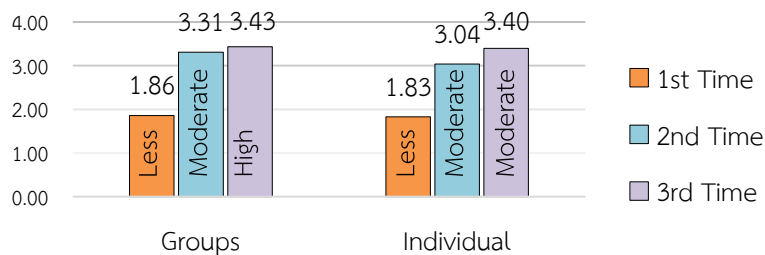
Figure 8. The result of groups and individual's observation

4.2 The results of students' behavior observation were shown that students were interested in learning by task-allocated. They were trying their best and using technology to practice English. Finally, their English communication skill was gradually developed.

However, there was a few behavior that needs to improve for instants, the students could not complete the activity on time in some context. Moreover, a small number of students did not cooperate with their group and also lack of perseverance in practices English. Thus, a good classroom should be created for the students.

5. The results of the focus group interview toward the GROUPS model were summarized as follows:

G – Gathering, this step was able to create a factual cooperative learning. Group's members took part in identifying individual tasks based on their aptitude. Students comprehend in what they should do in a step by step and keep the next step going. However, time-allocated should manage appropriately to run the activity more effectively. In addition, students attempt to eliminate their negative attitude on their ability awareness. Public mind and obligingness are also the key points for learning through GROUPS model.

R – Researching, information was selected via online resources by all members of the group. They can retrieve much more information in a few minutes. Therefore, self-directed learning, collaborative learning, technology literacy, and critical skills have been increased to the students. However, the information should be retrieved from the reliable resources.

O – Operating, the data in each learning unit in the lesson was compiled and revised through sharing, brainstorming and discussing among the group. Then, it was concluded in one composition. This activity generated reading and writing skill, critical thinking skill, and teamwork skill.

However, some students got less in critical thinking and could not decide that what information is reliable or unreliable. Therefore, the teacher should instruct them closely.

U - Uniting, the main idea was synthesized into the lesson-learned. It was presented independently in several formats, such as a chart, diagram, or mind-map. However, the content of the lesson-learned should be covered and designed in more colorful to motivate students.

P - Performing, all groups have to perform their work in an appropriate way. The bilingual language was acceptable for one who bad in English. Students enjoyed and became alert to carry out their tasks. However, more practicing in English speaking and body language are needed. After class, a good English student should guide a low one. In addition, they should present their work in more attractive details.

S - Sharing, students shared their idea through discussing after performing. In addition, the lesson-learned was distributed to the classroom board. It is able to encourage and boosting other students in learning English. However, some students did not enjoy and unconfident to share the information since there are several other English lessons that best for learning.

To identify the satisfaction level of students toward GROUPS Model, the results showed that in overall the satisfaction was at "Highest" level.

Discussion

To investigate the effectiveness of the GROUPS model in enhancing the student's English communication skill

1. According to the result of GROUPS model assessment, student's English communication skill was steadily improved. The average mean score of achievement test (t-test) were 8.39 and 19.63. It was related to the study of Yolsook (2008, p. 131) that the effectiveness analysis of the English for instructional communication package was 83.19 and 79.48. It can be interpreted that learning English through GROUPS model may develop English communication skill. In addition, the GROUPS model for learning units assessment in overall was shown that pre-test was at "Need to improve" while during learning units 1-4 were at "Fair", and units 5-7 were at "Good". However, post-test was at "Excellence". It can be interpreted that the content of each unit supports English communication skill. Moreover, the individual major assessment was shown that pre-test in all majors was at "Need to improve" and post-test was at "Excellence". However, for English major post-test was at "Excellence" while the other majors were at "Good". Therefore, the results showed consistency with the study of Unokphan et al. (2018, p. 46) that good instruction for English communication is based on flexible learning strategies and

environments. Thus, it can be interpreted that students' ability in English communication skill was gradually increased. In addition, regarding the data obtained, student's achievement in GROUPS model was steadily increased.

2. According to the result of the English performance assessment, student's English communication skill was steadily improved. The average mean score of achievement test (t-test) were 11.91 and 21.85. It was related to the study of Preedeekun (2011, p. 153) that the teaching and learning through activities after the intervention was significantly higher than pre-test at .01. In addition, the results of learning units performance showed that pre-test and units 1-4 were at "Fair" while units 5-7 and post-test were at "Good". It was related to the study of Lee and Park (2008, p. 47) that presentation on various topics can be used as a means of learning English for upper intermediate to advanced level students. Moreover, the results individual major assessment showed that in average pre-test in all majors was at "Need to improve" and post-test was at "higher". It can be concluded that class performance was able to generate active learning, self-directed learning and encourage students' confidence. Moreover, class performance was more effective than a traditional lecture class. In addition, class performance preparation was delivered to the students to take new vocabularies, phrases or expressions in English (Lee & Park, 2008, p. 47). Regarding the data obtained, class performance may develop English communication skill. Therefore, it can be interpreted that English performance by employing GROUPS model was gradually increased students' English communication skill.

3. Regarding the students' self-assessment, in overall pre-test was at "Least" while post-test was at "Moderate". In addition, according to the focus group interview, the students indicated that they needed to achieve in English communication skills. Several factors, such as motivation, confident and frequently practice are required to encourage the students for learning English effectively (Jung, 2011, p. 48). However, regarding the observation and interview, most of the students seemed to sustain a positive attitude toward English. They also realized on the essentials of the English language. In addition, students asserted that they had tried the best in motivating their confidence in learning English for communication. This finding is corroborated by the work of Phansrisuwan and Adipattaranan (2018, p. 55) revealed that learning English communication by group activity is able to develop the ability to think beyond, collaboration as well as students' confidence. Thus, students' English communication skill was gradually increased.

4. According to the students' behavior observation (checklist), groups' behavior observation at the first time was at "Less" while the second time was at "Moderate" and the third time was at "High".

In addition, the individual's behavior observation at the first time was at "Less" while the second and third time were at "Moderate". It could be assumed that GROUPS model was provided learning English step by step such as gathering, researching, operating, uniting, performing and sharing. However, students could not completely conduct the GROUPS model in some step, such as lesson-learned designed and class performance. This may be due to someone was absent, since when one of the members of the group disappears, the distribution of tasks does not go properly as planned. Thus, each group must have a good plan to share the task with each other and for one who was absent also. In addition, everyone in the group must be ready to take over their friend's task in the case of he/she could not come in that week. Nevertheless, students' behavior observation (un-structural observation) was shown in a positive manner. Students indicated that the GROUPS model was clear in learning step by step. They were interested in learning with the GROUPS model. All members were in charge of their tasks and practiced in speaking English through teachers' instruction. Nambiar et al. (2017, p. 29) proposed that using a new model approach helped to learn more interesting and improve student's attention in class. They were concentrated and engaged in group tasks and also performing developing better peer relationships and learning from each other. However, there was some negative behavior occurred for instance, students could not complete activities on time. Time-allocate and information were needed in good management. Moreover, classmate disturbing and also lack of perseverance in practices must be found a suitable solution. This may be due to the lesson was not very inspiring for someone (Ölmezer Öztürk & Ok, 2014, p. 130). Therefore, a good classroom is needed to provide and inspire the students.

     5. According to the focus group interview toward the GROUPS model framework, students indicated that GROUPS model is a new learning approach for them. The steps and processes were clear in detail. It would be a new approach to employ for learning English communication skill and the other of the 21st century learning skills. They believed that the step of G (Gathering) could create factual cooperative learning. Students took part in identifying the members' role and tasks step by step. Also, the step of R (Researching) could offer students to intersperse tasks in searching for information. This step develops self-directed learning, collaborative learning, technology literacy, and critical thinking. In addition, the step of O (Operating) would engender several skills such as compiling information, brainstorming, sharing information, discussion, reading and writing skill, critical thinking, and teamwork. At the end of the activity, the students can obtain a group workpiece for English communication skill. Also, the step of U (Uniting) could support students in designing the lesson-learned for English communication skill in several formats. Content reviewing, conclusion, critical thinking, and teamwork

were also generated through this step. In addition, the step of P (Performing) could encourage students' expression and present in English, active learning and groups working through the class performance. Finally, the step of S (Sharing) may support students to share their lesson-learned in public, giving and receiving feedback. However, they also suggested that for more successful in conducting this model the teachers should do well in time-allocated management in each step and instruct students closely in retrieving the information from reliable resources. In addition, the lesson-learned should be covered and designed in more colorful. This finding is corroborated by the work of Swatevacharkul (2016, p. 28) revealed that autonomy is a precondition for effective learning English in a different condition of the students. Thus, the focus group interview in perspective was in a positive manner.

To identify the satisfaction level of students toward GROUPS model

According to the satisfactory toward GROUPS model Framework, it was at the highest level. The informants pointed out that the content and processes of GROUPS model were helped students become more autonomous and improved their English communication skill. In addition, the model supports Groups-based learning, leaner-based, self-direct learning as well as the 21st century learning skills. Therefore, the satisfaction of students in perspective was at a positive attitude.

Recommendations

It would be a great idea to conduct and adapt the GROUPS model for learning and teaching of other English skills or other subjects for students in different learning levels. In addition, further studies could be done by investigating at different levels group, such as elementary, secondary or undergraduate with other English skills or other Sciences.

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